

Does CASE trump determiners? Considering blocking effects in heritage Turkishes in Germany and the U.S.

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Languages apply a wide range of strategies to mark definiteness and specificity. In many IE languages (e.g., German, English, Greek), (in)definiteness is expressed via determiners, articles and demonstratives. Turkish lacks a definite article and employs accusative case to mark definiteness and specificity. For NPs which contain the accusative marker but not the indefinite article *bir* ‘one’, a definite interpretation is assumed (1) (von Heusinger & Kornfilt, 2005). Some also argue that Turkish is an article-less language (Bošković & Şener, 2014). However, it may use demonstratives to signal a definite interpretation.

- (1) (Bu) kitab-ı oku-du-m
this book-ACC read-PRF.PST-1SG
‘I read the / this book.’

In contact situations, marking of definiteness may be affected by language transfer dynamics (Polinsky, 2006). Definiteness in heritage Turkishes is interesting to investigate as it is an under-researched field in the study of heritage languages, especially in the context of two different majority languages, namely German and English. Thus, depending on different combinations of heritage and majority languages, we explore Turkish heritage speakers’ strategies for the expression of definiteness and whether language contact leads to the emergence of new linguistic patterns in this domain. We expect that heritage speakers generalize the accusative-marking strategy and reduce the use of alternative strategies of marking definiteness in Turkish, i.e., a blocking effect on demonstrative pronouns and the controversial indefinite article *bir* ‘one’. Data from two age groups of heritage and monolingual Turkish speakers were elicited via a narration task in Germany, the U.S. and Turkey. The stimulus was a video of a mild fictional car accident which participants narrated in two different modes (oral and written) and two communicative situations (to a close friend, informal, and to the police, formal) (Wiese, 2020). In our corpus (the RUEG corpus, Wiese et al., 2020), heritage speakers mark definiteness with determiners less frequently compared to their monolingual peers. Our findings are explained by language contact effects and support our initial hypothesis. Emerging patterns of definiteness-marking in heritage languages call for analyses which have implications for ongoing theoretical discussions, e.g., the status of determiners and specificity in Turkish (Hedberg et al., 2009). Thus, we will conclude by revisiting some of the discussions about definiteness marking in (heritage) Turkishes (Erguvanlı-Taylan & Zimmer, 1994; Felser & Arslan, 2019; Kamali, 2015; Kupisch et al., 2017).

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